

Eggs of British Birds, with an Account of their Breeding-habits.—
Limicolæ. With 54 Coloured Plates. By FRANK POYNTING.
(R. H. Porter.)

MR. POYNTING is to be congratulated on the production of a work in which the illustrations are equal to those of Hewitson. We can hardly go further in the way of praise, for we have compared these plates with those of the Limicolæ in Hewitson's 1846 edition of the 'Eggs of British Birds,' undoubtedly the best in that respect, though the third edition (1856) contained additional figures of the eggs of about half a dozen Waders, mainly due to discoveries in Lapland by the late John Wolley. In the forty years which have elapsed increased facilities for travel and other circumstances have vastly increased our acquaintance with the nesting-haunts of many species, and where only a few specimens of eggs were available large series are now to be had. The opportunity has not been neglected, as shown by the figures of 6 eggs of the Cream-coloured Courser, 10 of the Grey Plover, 14 of the Little Stint, and 6 of the Bar-tailed Godwit; not to mention eggs more easily obtainable. Even the eggs of most of the wanderers from America are given, while, of the species which habitually visit our shores, only the Knot and the Curlew-Sandpiper remain without plates. The former of these species breeds in Arctic America, and the nestlings were obtained by the naturalists of the 'Alert' and the 'Discovery' on Grinnell Land in 1876, while General Greely, of the United States expedition, subsequently took from a female bird an egg apparently ready, or nearly ready, for extrusion; but this it would be premature to consider typical. The breeding-places of the Curlew-Sandpiper are probably on the extensive *tundras* of Arctic Siberia; and the natural difficulties in the way of reaching these are almost insuperable, except, perhaps, for an expedition subsidized by the Russian Government. Even while we write it is possible that Mr. H. J. Pearson and Col. H. W. Feilden may have been successful on their trip to Habarova this summer, though we hardly venture to anticipate such a result. The late Dr. von Middendorff obtained a female with a partially shelled egg in her oviduct on the Taimyr, in 74° N. lat., and that is the best up to the present.

A very strong feature of this admirable work is its text, which is largely compiled—with full acknowledgment—from authorities who have written from personal acquaintance with the various species or who have worked out their distribution. It is therefore, as the author says, "to a large extent a record of birds'-nesting adventures," and as such it cannot fail to be of interest to that very large class of ornithologists who, whatever be their age, are or have been birds'-nesters. For these the work is a compendium; it is, in fact, a history of the British Limicolæ at the most interesting period of their lives, without the descriptions of their plumage or of their behaviour during the cold season. The bibliography is well

chosen. One or two small oversights we notice; for instance, reference might have been made to Hewitson's figure of the egg of the Cream-coloured Courser—the first ever given—in 'The Ibis' for 1859, pl. ii. fig. 3; and with regard to Dann's communication to Yarrell respecting the nesting of the Broad-billed Sandpiper, the 1st edition of 'British Birds,' vol. ii. p. 639, and p. 642 (fig. of egg), should have been quoted rather than the 4th, in order to mark the early date of the discovery. On the whole, however, the work is as nearly perfect as any book can be, and, although necessarily costly, no ornithologist would willingly dispense with it. We are glad to hear that Mr. Poynting is preparing a similar work on the eggs of the British Raptores, and we trust that he may be further encouraged to give illustrations, with equally good letter-press, of the eggs of all the birds in the British List.

Trouessart's Catalogue of Mammals.

Catalogus Mammalium, tam Viventium quam Fossilium. By Dr. E. S. TROUSSERT. New Edition. Fasciculi I. and II., containing the Orders Primates, Prosimiæ, Chiroptera, Insectivora, Carnivora, Pinnipedia, and Rodentia (part). Berlin, 1897. Svo. Friedländer and Son.

STOCK-TAKING is an important operation in all trades, and in no case is it more urgently wanted than in Zoology, especially in Mammals. Few qualified zoologists would, however, care to undertake the enormous labour involved in the preparation of a systematic catalogue of all the known genera of Mammals, both recent and fossil; and the thanks of all interested in this particular branch of natural history are therefore due to the author of this *magnum opus*, who, it may be hoped, will enjoy the health and possess the patience and perseverance necessary to complete his self-imposed task.

With the changes that are daily taking place in our conceptions of zoological classification, and the perpetual emendations of nomenclature and descriptions of new forms that within the last few years have almost revolutionized the study of Mammals, and have rendered out of date almost every work on the subject before it has left the press, it cannot be expected that any sort of finality will be attached to the work before us. Indeed, although it is thoroughly well up to date, it may be observed that several important modifications have already been suggested in the classification of more than one group since the work went to press.

With the general scheme of classification adopted by Dr. Trouessart—that is, the division of the class into orders and families—we have no special concern, particularly as it is in the main that followed by most English writers on the subject. Of far more general interest are the author's modes of dealing with the burning questions of nomenclature, orthography, and the limitations of species and subspecies.